

My name is Jim Holtrop and I am the chair of the Ottawa County board of commissioners. Today, I am here to testify in support of HB 5117, and 5118. In July of 2012, our county commission adopted a resolution to determine whether or not the county board of commissioners should dissolve the road commission. A 12-member task force was formed and comprised of officials from the county, the road commission, the townships and the business community. Another task force was formed to study the benefits and drawbacks of enacting PA 185 of 1957 which allows the County to absorb the public utility services that are currently performed by our road commission.

Both task forces reported in mid-2013 that there were not any overall cost-savings or any direct increase in service levels to be realized by making the road commission part of county government. However, both task forces identified a number collaboration opportunities and the sharing of best practices between the two organizations. A memo of understanding was adopted by both the board of county commissioners and the board of road commissioners. Of special note in the MOU was the addressing of road commission legacy costs by enrolling new employees in a defined contribution plan instead of a defined benefit plan and the elimination of post-retirement healthcare.

Public Acts 14 & 15 has given our Board the ability to compel our Road Commission to comply with the MOU. Unfortunately, we will lose that ability for current and future improvements if the laws are allowed to sunset. I respectfully ask you to remove the sunset dates in the Acts and continue to give Counties the option to transfer the powers, duties and functions of road commission to the county board. Counties should be allowed to decide how their road commissions are governed.